

>> FOOTBALL PREVIEW ISSUE >>

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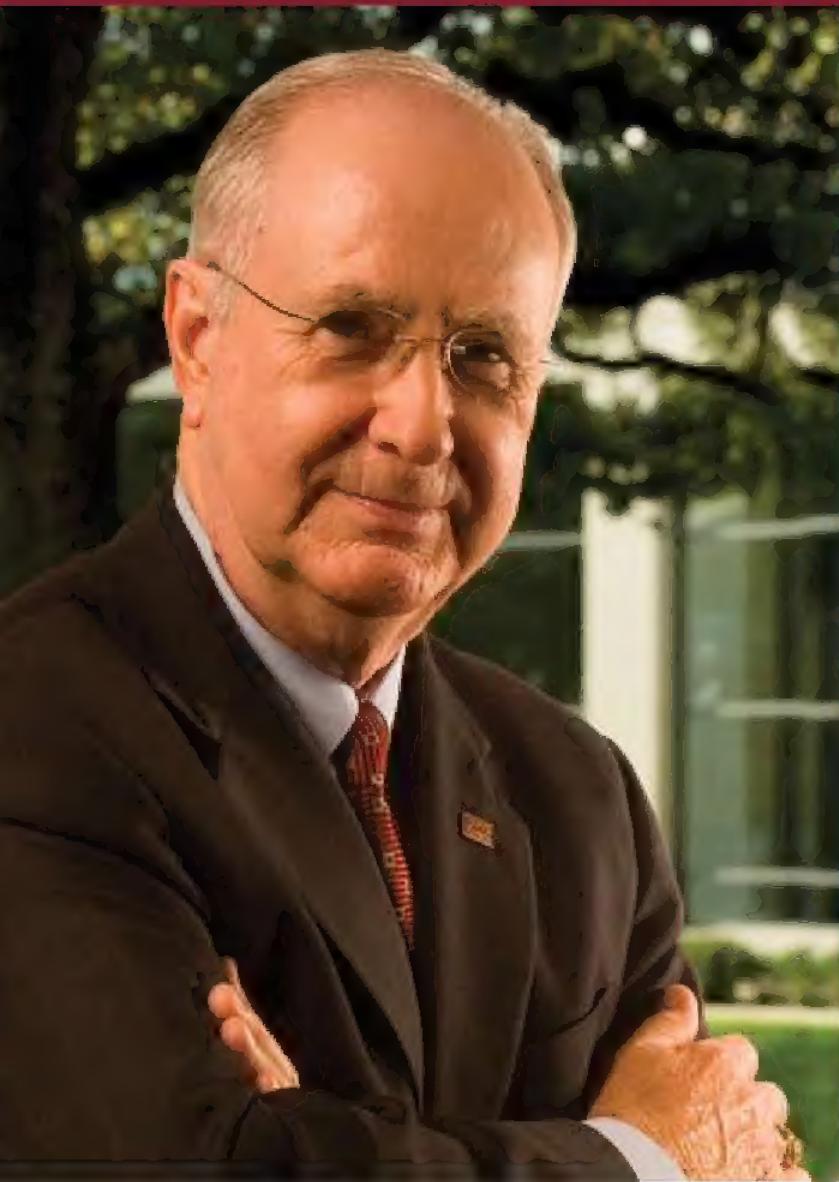
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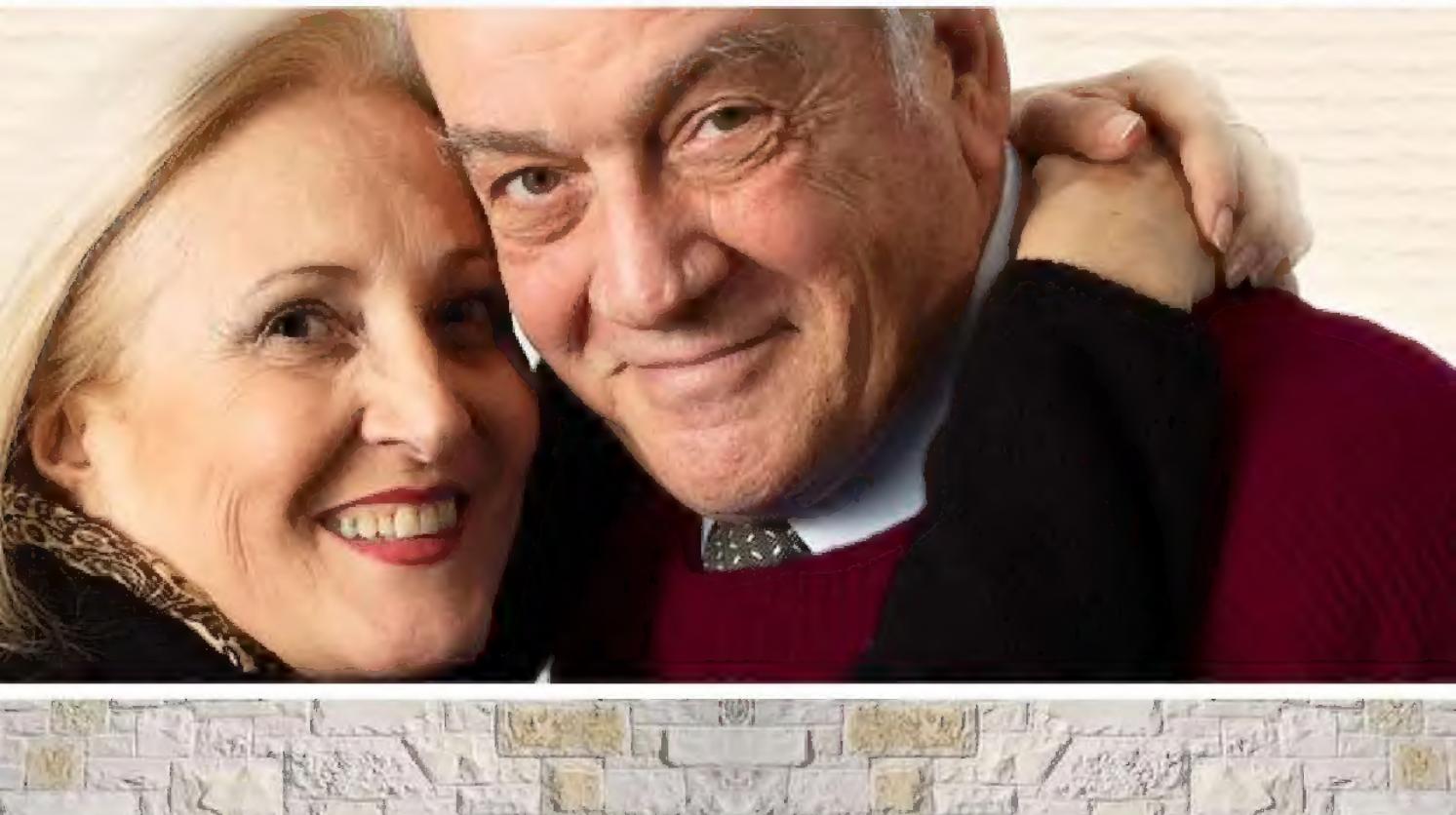
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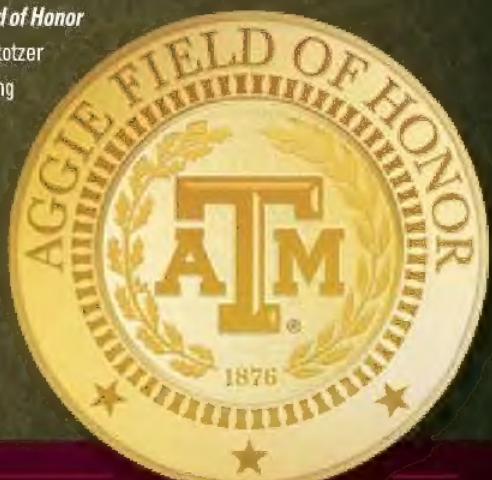
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The A&M football team is ready to take the field and begin the Mike Sherman era.

BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04

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BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04

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An Aggie architect's vision leads to the construction of the most advanced sports facility in the world. BY STEVE HUNT



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On the Cover: Junior running back Mike Goodson is ready to shine in Mike Sherman's pro-style offense. Photo by Brian Davis '01.

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Do you recognize the A&M shadow in this photo? If so, send an e-mail to photo@aggiemag.com and let us know where it's located. Get it right and we'll enter your name in a drawing for a free copy of *Standing for America: The Spirit of Kyle Field*. Look for the answer in the next issue of *AJ*.



Think you recognize
this cowboy? Find out
who it is in the next
issue of *AI*.

Howdy!

Well the restaurants and retailers in Bryan/College Station are starting to fill up again, which must mean the students are making their way to Aggieland to begin another year. It also means that the next season of Aggie football is finally upon us.

The offseason seemed to drag on and on (as it always does), and now with fall practice in full swing, the uncertainty of what to expect seems to be at an all-time high. Almost everyone I talk to adamantly believes that Mike Sherman and his staff are the answer to resurrecting the Texas A&M program. I tend to agree with them, and so far the staff has said and done all the right things while going the extra mile to embrace the 12th Man. But no one seems too confident in their expectations of Sherman's first season.

Will the upperclassmen buy into Sherman's system?

Will defensive coordinator Joe Kines be able to find a quick fix for the Aggie defense?

Will talented, yet inexperienced players at offensive line, tight end, wide receiver and linebacker raise their game to another level?

Will the Aggies finally be able to beat Texas Tech or Oklahoma, or make it three in a row over the Longhorns?

Those questions and more lead to the uncertainty. Some experts and fans think A&M is in for a rough season and a potential losing record, while others point to a somewhat favorable schedule and are convinced the Aggies can win nine or ten games. The truth is, nobody is sure what will happen, and I think that just adds to the excitement of the season.

I know I'm excited. I can't wait to see what these players and coaches are capable of. I can't wait to experience the sights and sounds of Kyle Field again.

I also can't wait to see our volleyball and soccer teams in action this fall. Juniors Mary Batis, Sarah Ammerman and Jenny Banse are determined to take the volleyball program to the upper echelon of the Big 12 and back to the NCAA tournament. And an influx of talented freshmen will be challenged to help keep the Aggie soccer program on top.

Indeed, it's almost time for another year of Texas A&M athletics. I can't wait.

Gig'em Ags!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason '01".

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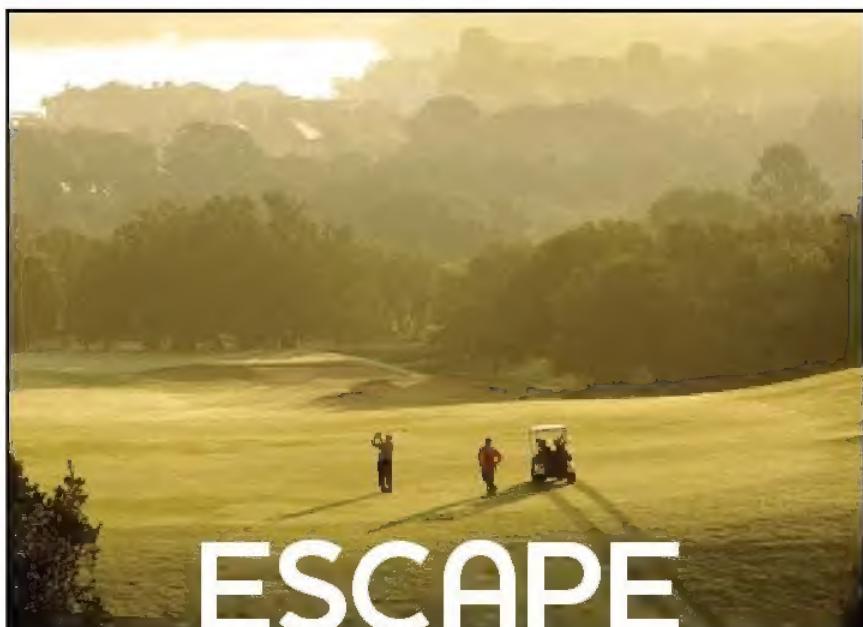
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snapshot



aggie olympians

The largest ever contingent of Texas A&M University representatives made their way to the 2008 Olympic Games held in Beijing, China. In all, 17 Aggie athletes and coaches representing nine different countries participated, including (clockwise from top left) Christine Marshall (USA, swimming), Tyrone Edgar (Great Britain, track), Stacy Sykora (USA, volleyball), Davey Johnson (USA, baseball) and Julia Wilkinson (Canada, swimming). Photos by AP and Getty Images.









gray eminence

If there's one player who has turned the most heads during fall camp, it's one freshman: Tyrone Gray. There was never a question about his talent coming out of high school, but his seemingly smooth transition to the college level and his electrifying playmaking ability has Aggie coaches, players and fans dreaming of what No. 32 will do on Saturdays. Photo by Brian Davis/OD

snap

double vision

Twin soccer sensations Cydne (#22) and Natalie (#2) Currie go head-to-head in the Maroon & White intrasquad scrimmage. Entering their junior seasons, Cydne, a forward, and Natalie, a midfielder, join a small group of veterans on a young Aggie team and will play a vital role in helping the program remain among the nation's elite.

Photo by Brian Davis '01





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catching up with **BRANDAL JACKSON**

BY JEREMY KS ONDA '04

Throughout spring and fall camp, Mike Sherman's post-practice interviews have routinely included pleas for consistency from the wide receiver position. Thus far, the current group of receivers have struggled to reach Sherman's standards. With only one receiver in the 2008 signing class, clearly, the need for young playmakers at wide receiver would make the position a priority in the class of 2009. The good news is that help is on its way. By the end of July, the Aggies had gained commitments from four of the state's top prospects at wide receiver.

Allen High School's Uzoma Nwachukwu is a blazing prospect that lived in the shadow of Longhorn-signee Dan Buckner last season, but still managed to pick up offers from A&M, Oklahoma, Notre Dame among a host of others. Two other receiver commits — Ryan Swope of Austin Westlake and Spring's Kenric McNeal

— will spend their senior season playing other positions before arriving in Aggieland.

Navasota's Brandal Jackson, however, will arrive as the most polished member of the group. The 6-1, 180-pounder has wracked up 53 receptions, 1,117 yards and 12 touchdowns during two seasons on the varsity squad. To put it in perspective, his career yardage is good enough to rank him in the top 25 career receiving yards at A&M, and 8 of his 12 touchdowns came last season, which is good



enough to tie the mark for receiving touchdowns in one year at A&M.

Jackson's head coach at Navasota is a familiar face to many Aggie fans. Lee Fedora '94 was a standout on the baseball field and gridiron for Texas A&M. Fedora called Jackson "a steal" for the Aggies.

"He's one of the best receivers I've ever coached because he can go get the football better than anyone I've seen," Fedora said. "I think he's got a lot of upside when he gets to college and can focus strictly on football. He has the ability to put good weight on, has good speed and very good elusiveness."

Typically, the best playmakers at the high school level line up at quarterback or running back, but Fedora praises Jackson's rare ability to control a game from the wide receiver position.

"If our opponent is stopping us from running the football, then we can throw it to him and get some routes to him where he can take the game over completely by himself," Fedora says.



"He's one of the best receivers I've ever coached because he can go get the football better than anyone I've seen. I think he's got a lot of upside when he gets to college and can focus strictly on football."

—NAVASOTA HEAD COACH LEE FEDORA '94



The choice to become an Aggie was a joint decision by Jackson and his family.

"My parents wanted me to get a good education to go along with football," he said. "A&M has great academics and we've always heard that Aggies take care of Aggies. I can always have a job after I finish college if football doesn't work out."

When he arrives in Aggieland next year, Jackson will have a great opportunity to earn early playing time, although it doesn't seem to be a concern of his.

"It's a good thing to be redshirted because you can sit out, learn and get better," he said. "But if they put me in and let me play, then that would be good too. It really doesn't matter to me."

For now, though, Aggie fans will have to wait one more season before Jackson dons the maroon and white. And while Fedora is excited for his players' opportunities to move on to the next level, his expectations are higher than ever for his Rattlers to live up to their high preseason billing this season. Navasota is widely considered to be one of the top three teams in Texas Class 3A football this year after a deep playoff run in 2007. Fedora preaches a focus on "the now" to his bevy of Division 1 talent, and it appears the players are listening.

"I'm not too worried about the number of catches or touchdowns I get," Jackson said. "I just want to help my team win."

Coaches and teammates call Jackson "puppy dog" because he is so playful and easygoing.

"I think A&M's getting not only a great player, but also a great person as well," Fedora adds.

Indeed, Jackson should be a great addition to the program and provide the help that Aggie coaches are searching for. ■

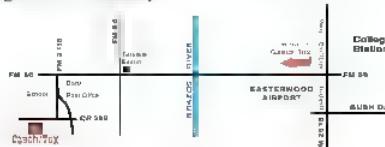


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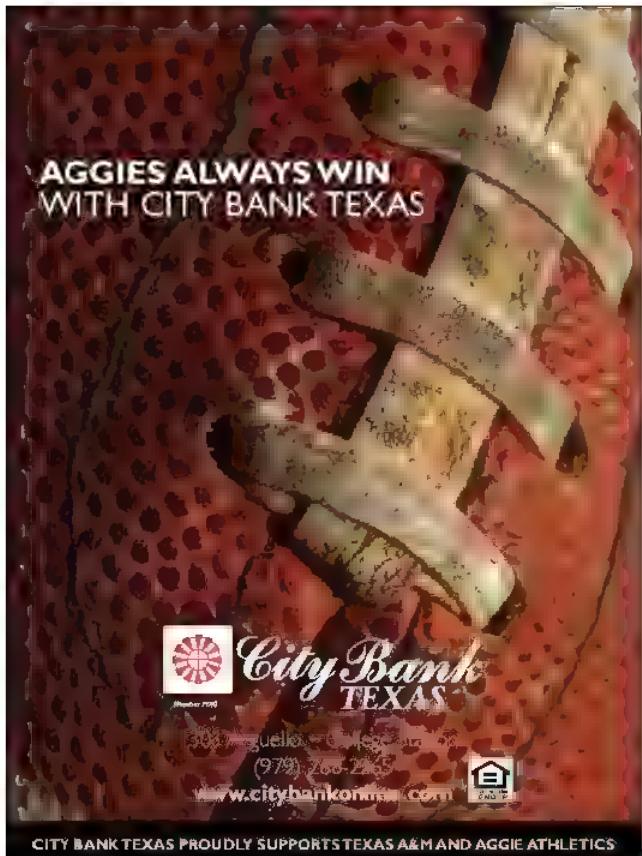
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With 25 verbal commitments, the Texas A&M 2009 football signing class is almost complete prior to the first kickoff of the 2008 season. National signing day is five months away, but here's a look at the Aggies-to-be.

	PATRICK LEWIS (OL) East St. John's (LA) HT 6-2 WT 290 <i>One of the nation's top interior line recruits</i>
	KENRICK MCNEAL (ATH) Spring (Spring, TX) HT 6-1 WT 165 <i>16-5A First Team All-District QB</i>
	CLINT NARON (OL) Klein Oak (Klein, TX) HT 6-5 WT 275 <i>Texas Football Super Team OL (1st)</i>
	UZOMA NWACHUKWU (WR) Allen (Allen, TX) HT 6-0 WT 180 <i>Great hands, acceleration and field vision</i>
	SEAN PORTER (LB) Schertz Clemens (Schertz, TX) HT 6-2 WT 205 <i>Tremendous athlete with great quickness</i>
	HUTSON PRIOLEAU (TE) All Saints Episcopa (Fort Worth, TX) HT 6-5 WT 230 <i>The state's top-ranked tight end</i>
	RHONTE SCALES (OL) Killeen (Killeen, TX) HT 6-5 WT 285 <i>16-4A First Team All-District OL</i>
	JONATHAN STEWART (LB) Shreveport Byrd (LA) (Shreveport, LA) HT 6-4 WT 220 <i>Tall, rangy, sideline-to-sideline linebacker</i>
	RYAN SWOPE (ATH) Austin Westlake (Austin, TX) HT 6-0 WT 190 <i>5A Honorable Mention All-State RB</i>
	STEVEN TERRELL (DB) Allen (Allen, TX) HT 5-11 WT 175 <i>Physical player with great speed</i>
	CHARLIE THOMAS (DB) Beaumont Central (Beaumont, TX) HT 6-1 WT 195 <i>22-4A First Team All-District OL/B</i>
	COLTON VALENCIA (DB) Fort Bend Hightower (Fort Bend, TX) HT 5-10 WT 175 <i>Lockdown corner that hits like a safety</i>
	IVORY WADE (OL) Dickinson (Dickinson, TX) HT 6-3 WT 285 <i>23-4A First Team All-District OL</i>
	ANDREW WEAVER (LB) Waco (Waco, TX) HT 6-3 WT 225 <i>16-4A First Team All-District DE</i>

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TOP 113 IN 09

Quarterbacks (10)

1	Garrett Gilbert <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Lake Travis	6-3	185
2	Ryan Mossakowski <small>Committed to Kentucky</small>	Frisco Centennial	6-6	210
3	Tyrik Rollison <small>In FLA, NC, AZ</small>	Sulphur Springs	6-2	185
4	Cody Green <small>Committed to Nebraska</small>	Dayton	6-3	205
5	Shevondrick Beaver <small>Committed to Michigan</small>	Wichita Falls Rider	6-4	200
6	Drew Allen <small>Committed to Oklahoma</small>	Alamo Heights	6-4	195
7	Jacob Karam <small>Committed to Texas Tech</small>	Friendswood	6-0	180
8	Kolby Gray <small>BL, CAL, GA, TT, RICE</small>	Cy Falls	6-2	180
9	Christian Matthews <small>Committed to Kansas</small>	Bowie	6-4	180
10	Casey Pachall <small>Committed to TCU</small>	Brownwood	6-4	185

Running Backs (9)

1	Christine Michael <small>A&M, UGA, OR, TEX</small>	Beaumont Westbrook	5-11	195
2	Dexter Pratt <small>Committed to UGA</small>	Navasota	6-2	220
3	Stepfan Taylor <small>Committed to Stanford</small>	Mansfield	6-0	185
4	Krone Davis <small>A&M, B, K, MZ</small>	Marshall	6-0	205
5	Kalvin Guyton <small>A&M Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Houston Lamar	5-9	200
6	Jonathan Miller <small>Committed to Oklahoma</small>	Naaman Forest	6-0	180
7	Hasan Lipscomb <small>Committed to Minnesota</small>	Cypress Ridge	5-11	205
8	Toben Opurum	Plano East	6-2	225
9	Jurell Thompson <small>Committed to TCU</small>	Wichita Falls Rider	5-10	190

Tight Ends (4)

1	Garrison Johnson <small>A&M Committed to Texas A&M</small>	All Saints Episcopal	6-1	230
2	Barrett Matthews <small>Committed to Texas</small>	North Shore	6-2	235
3	Jordan Najvar <small>Committed to Stanford</small>	Klein Oak	6-6	235
4	Trey Graham <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Waco Midway	6-5	225

Wide Receivers (13)

1	Greg Timmons <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Aldine Eisenhower	6-3	195
2	Uzoma Nwachukwu <small>A&M Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Allen	6-0	190
3	Eric Ward <small>Committed to Oklahoma</small>	Wichita Falls Rider	5-11	185
4	Brendal Jackson <small>A&M Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Navasota	6-1	185
5	Marquis Goodwin <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Rowlett	5-9	160
6	DeWayne Peace <small>Committed to Michigan</small>	South Grand Prairie	5-11	170
7	Josh Gordon <small>A&M, TC, MZ, NEB, TT</small>	Lamar	6-4	210
8	Dameon Smith	Marshall	6-1	205
9	Aaron Fisher <small>Committed to Texas Tech</small>	Fossil Ridge	6-4	200
10	Jarrod Darden <small>Committed to Colorado</small>	Keller Central	6-4	210
11	Emory Blake <small>TC, BC, ND, ORE, TEX</small>	Austin	6-2	200
12	Jazman Reynolds <small>Committed to Oklahoma</small>	Aldine Eisenhower	6-4	180
13	Chase Loubert <small>A&M, FS, CA, MA, TT</small>	Arlington Grace Prep	6-1	185

Offensive Linemen (16)

1	Mason Walters <small>Committed to UTEP, Texas</small>	Frenship	6-8	290
2	Umar James <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Killeen	6-6	285
3	Nevy Ward <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Clear Lake	6-6	280
4	Stavion Lowe <small>Committed to LSU</small>	Brownwood	6-4	285
5	Stephen Barrera <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Clear Lake	6-6	280
6	Cont Nance <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Klein Oak	6-6	280
7	Thomas Ashcraft <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Cedar Hill	6-5	280
8	Garrett Porter <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Odessa Permian	6-6	300
9	Ty Horn <small>Committed to TCU</small>	Waco Midway	6-5	270
10	Kyle Clark <small>Committed to Texas Tech</small>	Denton Guyer	6-4	270
11	Zoel Gray <small>KE, JU, NEB, STA, TT</small>	Hebron	6-6	285
12	Josh Aladendoye <small>Committed to Oklahoma</small>	North Mesquite	6-5	300
13	Paden Kelley <small>Committed to Oklahoma</small>	Lake Travis	6-6	265
14	Michael Brown <small>NEB, OL, CYS, MISS, STA</small>	Lexington	6-5	295
15	Jesse Coffey <small>Committed to Nebraska</small>	Denton Guyer	6-7	270
16	Bobby Janisch <small>Committed to TCU, Rice</small>	Houston Jersey Village	6-6	290

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Defensive Tackles (8)

1	Jamarcus McFarland <small>A&M TEX C Lsu OKS</small>	Lufkin	6-3	280
2	Chris Henderson <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Dallas Carter	6-1	250
3	Calvin Howell <small>Committed to Texas</small>	San Antonio Warren	6-4	270
4	James Dunbar <small>Committed to TCU</small>	Maud	6-6	290
5	Kyles Kriegel <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Elysian Fields	6-5	235
6	Nosa Eguae	Mansfield Summit	6-2	245
7	Bryant House <small>Committed to TCU</small>	Maud	6-4	265
8	Thaddeus Randle <small>Committed to Nebraska</small>	Northshore	6-1	250

Linebackers (13)

1	Thomas Woot <small>Committed to Oklahoma</small>	New Braunfels	6-1	210
2	Tariq Allen <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Irving MacArthur	6-2	230
3	Brandon Mahoney <small>Committed to Stanford</small>	Fossil Ridge	6-2	210
4	Sean Porter <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Schertz-Clemens	6-2	205
5	Chris Williams	Abilene	6-1	205
6	Andrew Weaver <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Waco	6-3	225
7	Malcolm Johnson <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Waco	6-2	225
8	Chris McAllister	Converse Junction	6-2	210
9	Patrick Nkwopara <small>Committed to Texas</small>	South Grand Prairie	5-11	195
10	Austin Moss <small>Committed to Arkansas</small>	South Garland	6-2	205
11	Tanner Brock <small>Committed to TCU</small>	Copperas Cove	6-3	205
12	Rod Goodlow	Dallas Adamson	6-2	205
13	James Scott <small>Committed to Texas Tech</small>	Coldspring	6-3	220

Defensive Ends (9)

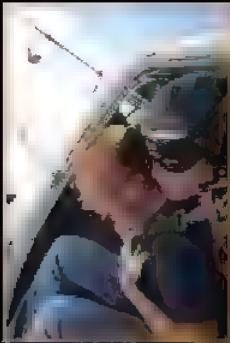
1	Michael Brockers <small>Committed to</small>	Houston Chavez	6-3	230
2	Alex Okafor <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Pflugerville	6-4	220
3	Dominique Jones <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Kilgore	6-3	230
4	Terrance Lloyd <small>A&M TEX C MZ</small>	Houston Stratford	6-4	220
5	Kirby Ennis <small>Committed to</small>	Huntsville	6-4	235
6	Josh Forde <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	St. Paul	6-5	255
7	Brandon Henderson <small>Committed to SMU</small>	Abilene Cooper	6-3	225
8	Josh Skinner <small>Committed to Florida</small>	Silsbee	6-5	225
9	Kerry Hyder <small>A&M TEX C MZ MIN TEX</small>	Austin LB	6-3	230

Defensive Backs (20)

1	Craig Loston <small>Committed to Clemson</small>	Aldine Eisenhower	6-3	185
2	Kevin Brent <small>KU MA L TEX IT</small>	South Oak Cliff	6-0	210
3	Steve Williams <small>Committed to Oklahoma</small>	Dallas Skyline	5-10	160
4	Marcus Davis <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Clear Creek	6-1	180
5	Eryon Barnett <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Euless Trinity	6-2	180
6	Steven Terrell <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Allen	5-11	175
7	A.J. Dugat <small>Committed to TCU</small>	Dayton	6-1	195
8	Colton Valencia <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Fort Bend Hightower	5-10	175
9	Charlie Thomas <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Beaumont Central	5-11	175
10	Kenny Vaccaro <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Brownwood	6-0	175
11	Will Ford <small>Committed to Texas Tech</small>	Abilene Cooper	6-1	190
12	Stephen Campbell <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Jersey Village	6-0	180
13	Marcus Trice <small>Committed to UK & Ohio</small>	Mesquite	5-8	170
14	Desmond Gardner <small>A&M TCU BU FLA VT</small>	Port Arthur Memorial	5-11	180
15	Terrance Bullitt <small>Committed to Texas Tech</small>	Naaman Forest	6-3	180
16	Eddie Foster	Colleyville Heritage	6-0	175
17	Yahshua Williams	Denton Ryan	6-3	185
18	Dele Junaid	Fort Bend Hightower	6-2	185
19	Dexter Linton <small>Committed to Kansas</small>	Arlington Bowie	6-0	185
20	Thomas Bates <small>Committed to Houston</small>	Baytown Lee	5-11	180

Athletes (11)

1	Russell Shepard <small>Committed to LSU</small>	Cy Ridge	6-2	145
2	Chris Whaley <small>Committed to Texas</small>	Madisonville	6-2	205
3	Ryan Swope <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Austin Westlake	6-0	190
4	Darius Jones <small>Committed to Florida</small>	Marshall	6-0	180
5	Rex Burkhead <small>BAMA NEB A B K VFA</small>	Plano	6-0	190
6	Kenric McNeal <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Spring	6-1	165
7	Dustin Harris <small>Committed to Texas A&M</small>	Spring	6-1	165
8	A.J. Highsmith <small>Committed to Midway</small>	Fort Bend Hightower	6-0	185
9	Richard Morrison <small>Committed to Arizona</small>	Rose City	6-0	170
10	Charles Ross <small>Committed to UTEP</small>	Schertz-Clemens	6-1	195
11	Broderick Jackson <small>Committed to Rice</small>	Kirbyville	5-11	200



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9 QUESTIONS FOR TEXAS A&M VOLLEYBALL JUNIORS JENNY BANSE, SARAH AMMERMAN AND MARY BATIS

You guys played in a European tour this summer to help prepare for the upcoming season. How was that experience?

AMMERMAN: We trained for two weeks before the trip. We were over there for 14 days and played some tough competition including Italy, Portugal, France, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Austria. They were a bit stressed, but it was a different style of volleyball and we learned a lot from it.

BATIS: They played at a higher level than us quick as we play in America. And their warm-ups are lots different. They had to lay on the floor for 10 to 15 minutes before the match, pepper get their body warm, stretch a little bit, then they are ready to play. Where as here, we come in before matches and just bust out a whole day of warming up. We played some of the best volleyball we have ever played. We developed so much. You can tell we

are a mature group on the court now. We have such great team chemistry. It was good to find, see that carry over from practice to the court so consistently. One of the coolest things was after we played the pro team in the Czech Republic, one of the girls came to dinner with us and she got up and said, "that we were the best team they had played in four years." We took them to five games and played some incredible volleyball. No one had ever taken them to five games. Their setter said whenever our server received it was on, we were unstoppable. That was great. It showed just how awesome we played.

BANSE: I heard the coaches talking about it after we got back and they said some of the teams we played would win big 12 or NCAA titles. They are that good. Just to be able to compete with these women that have been playing volleyball at their level, it's a good

feeling. It makes everyone excited about what we have and what we are going to do. Every one is looking forward to it.

Did you do some sightseeing while you were there?

AMMERMAN: It was pretty cool between volleyball and sightseeing. The cool part about it was they would tell us where we would want to go so we would split up into small groups and they would take us to what we wanted to see. We would take a day and see the whole city. There were some amazing scenes. It was a lot of fun.

BATIS: It was cool to see all the stuff in the history because that stuff is priceless. At the same time it was cool to see how we interacted outside of the volleyball world. We went to dinner together and hung out. We shared together's sightsaw a word? But it wasn't like

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we were in the gym the whole time. We got to talk to our coaches a lot more and got to know them on a different level.

BANSE: It is just something we'll remember our entire life. I couldn't think of a better trip to take than with 15 of your best friends. It was awesome.

Where there any memorable moments off the court?

BATIS: The gelato was a big deal.

AMMERMAN: Oh...the gelato.

BATIS: We had it once a day, maybe twice.

AMMERMAN: They had all different flavors...we tried them all.

So how did the trip help prepare you for the upcoming season?

AMMERMAN: We went into the trip thinking it would help us a little, but it really did help us more than we could've ever imagined. It was one of the best things we could've ever done. Those extra matches can't be recreated during the summer. To have those situations and to learn how to compete is exactly what we needed.

BATIS: And we knew nothing about the other teams going into it. We kind of knew they played a higher game, but we didn't know anything about them...no scouting reports or film. That was really good for us to adjust and work through it as a team and figure it out a little quicker.

Looking back to last year, you guys finished 21-10 and .500 in conference yet you still weren't invited to the NCAA tournament. Is that fuel for this year?

AMMERMAN: That experience was one of the worst of my life. It was just so heartbreaking because you put in so much work and we really thought we deserved it. So that was really hard, but at the same time when we look back, it puts everything into realty.

BATIS: Yeah, I mean, that's what ignited us in the spring and made us the team we are now.

AMMERMAN: It makes us think we have to gain control on the court at the time.

BATIS: We can't leave a doubt. We were on a bubble and we can't be on a bubble. That was our fault.

BANSE: I think looking back, we didn't know necessarily what we were working for. We know now. We know that those 2 or 3 extra points at the end of that 5th match is what really counts. We're not going to let that slip by again.

BATIS: Our motto should be "Leave no doubt." It's not official, but...like it.

Does the success of some of the other sports on campus motivate you guys?

BANSE: We talked about it all the time, watching the College World Series, goose bumps covered my entire body the whole time. I was just so happy for them and a little jealous at the same time.

BATIS: It's something that we definitely want, and seeing it happen repeatedly, I think is really encouraging to us. The women win everything.

AMMERMAN: We've definitely noticed that. It's motivational.

BATIS: It is definitely motivational, just to see how happy they are, and we hear about how hard they work. It's not an easy road and so getting there is such a great feeling of accomplishment and it's something we desire.

AMMERMAN: A little pressure, yeah, but it's good pressure.



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As Juniors, you all have a few seasons under your belt. How have you grown as leaders on the team?

AMMERMAN: The last couple of years we were just trying to figure it all out, it's a pretty big task. We're ready now. We know what we want.

BATIS: We're going to do whatever it takes. We've had a lot of struggles keeping each other accountable. We know that we aren't taking each other for not getting the ball. We just want so much more. We don't take it off the court - think we're mature enough and can understand that we can hold each other accountable because we want it so bad.

BANSE: And as a freshman or underclassman, you don't really know what your role is. You don't know if you can say, "Hey junior, or hey senior, get your butt on the floor for that ball." It's not necessarily your place, but we're older now and the team dynamic has changed a lot because we've talked about it a lot. We know that nothing is personal, nothing is going to break anyone else's heart or whatever. It's all about what you want and what it's going to take to get it.

The team lost two seniors last year. Who is coming in that will make an impact this season?

AMMERMAN: We had three freshmen come in during the spring. They graduated early, which was really great for us to have that extra semester with them. Chesea Black and Chelsea Ringe are both great all around players.

BATIS: Then, a girl who didn't make it to the court very much last year is Darla Donaldson. She's a stud. She's got one of the biggest blocks in conference. She is going to be our biggest surprise.

What games are circled on your calendar?

AMMERMAN: Definitely our first one against LSU. That is a huge one for us. They are a big rival for us. We've never beat them. The coaches tried to schedule non-conference teams that had made the tournament last year. We're trying to play tougher teams because that was one of the reasons we didn't make it last year.

BATIS: Most of the Big 12 can name them all, don't want to name them all. We have a lot of revenge coming.



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BRIAN DAVIS '01



CONTINUING THE TRADITION

BY JASON MCCONNELL '01

The past four years have been some of the best for the Aggie Soccer team. The eight seniors from the Class of 2008, led by All American and Honda Sports Award winner Ashlee Pistorius, were the most decorated in Texas A&M history, earning Back-to-Back-to-Back-to-Back Championships.

The Aggies began last season with high hopes fresh off a trip to the Sweet 16 and with a rare opportunity to play for a national championship on their home turf.

After an early season loss to No. 3 North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a win over No. 14 West Virginia and a tie with No. 15 Penn State, the Aggies began conference play with a record of 6-1-1. Missouri proved that they were deserving of their No. 16 ranking, outscoring A&M 3-2 in a double-overtime thriller in Columbia. The Aggies went on to sweep the rest of their Big 12 competition, including wins over No. 22 Oklahoma State and No. 1 Texas, earning their fourth consecutive Big 12 Championship with a record of 16-2-1.

Ranked No. 2 in the nation, the Aggies played host to Texas, BYU and Stephen F. Austin in the first and second rounds of the NCAA tournament. A 4-1 opening-round victory over SFA set up a showdown with archrival Texas and a chance to move on to the Sweet 16. Under the lights and in the rain at the Aggie Soccer Stadium, the Aggies fell short, 2-3, ending the season with an 18-4-2 record.

The eight seniors finished their amazing careers with a 71-20-5 record.

In an attempt to replace the departing senior class and continue the streak of consecutive Big 12 championships, Aggie soc-

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cer coach G. Guerrieri signed one of the biggest and deepest classes of incoming freshman to A&M.

"We needed to bring in a class that could inject immediate starters and role players," Guerrieri said on signing day.

Forwards Jennifer Knezevich (Larimer, CO) and transfer Alyssa Mautz (O'Fallon, MO) will join sophomores Whitney Hooper and Inge Harding, and junior Cydne Currie on offense. Mautz joined the team in January to participate in spring drills.

In the midfield, Rebecca Herrera (Aurora, CO) will play alongside senior Laura Grace Robinson, junior Natalie Currie and sophomore Rachel Shipley. Katie Hamilton (Spring) and Raven Tatum (Dallas) will fill time at both forward and midfield.

Playing both midfield and defense will be Rachael Balaguer (Austin), Beth West (Centennial, CO) and Carly Wohlers (Plano) flanking returning junior Amber Gnatzig.

From a true defender standpoint, Shawn-tae Greene (Mesa, AZ) and Brianne Young (Castle Pines North, CO) will learn from senior Micah Stephens and juniors Emily Peterson and Nicole Ketchum.

Lisel Kraus (Sachse) and Megan Majewski (Cypress) will play both defense and forward for the Aggies.

Junior Kristen Arnold a preseason All-Big 12 selection will mind the goal.

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With so many new faces, Texas A&M earned a No. 15 national ranking in the preseason poll and was picked to finish second in the conference by the coaches behind Texas—the same team which cost the Ags both a Big 12 Tournament Championship and a trip to the sweet sixteen last year.

Texas A&M's road to the Final Four will not be any easier this season. The non-conference schedule includes a return visit from No. 3 North Carolina on August 29—the 2006 contest was an instant classic—as well as battles with No. 21 Wake Forest on September 7 and No. 17 California on September 19.

Big 12 play kicks off on September 26 with the ultimate test—a road trip to Austin to face No. 8 Texas—where the A&M team will aim to avenge their two losses from last season. Following a visit to Baylor, the Aggies return home to face No. 23 Oklahoma State, Oklahoma, Nebraska and Iowa State. After a road trip to Lawrence to face Kansas, the Aggies play their final regular season home game on October 19 against Missouri on ESPNU. They close out conference play with road contests against Texas Tech and Colorado.

The Aggies' inexperience combined with a tough schedule likely means there will be some growing pains this season. But as conference coaches showed by selecting the Aggies as the second best team in the Big 12, the fall from the top should not be far—if there's a fall at all. In the league's 12 seasons, Texas A&M has earned 10 conference championships. If history is any indication, the Aggies have a great opportunity to continue the tradition in 2008. ■



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FOOTBALL PREVIEW

BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04



"I've always kind of viewed myself as a passing quarterback, yet I've kind of taken on the label of an option quarterback. But at the end of the day I just want to be a winning quarterback."

—STEPHEN McGEE

What started as a competition at the beginning of fall camp quickly turned into the Stephen McGee show. During two-a-days, McGee, a senior and now three-year starter, showed why he was such a highly regarded and recruited pro-style prospect coming out of Burnet High School. A strong arm, much improved accuracy, and of course, the ability to run with the football will enable McGee to finally lead the Aggies in a pro-style offense. If he has a big year, the 6-3, 210-pound gunslinger could find his name called in next year's NFL draft.

While he never quite found a way to unseat McGee from the starter's throne, sophomore Jerrod Johnson showed enough potential to keep No. 7 on a short leash. The 6-6 athletic sensation has shown flashes of brilliance when given the opportunity in live situations, and tends to be better in improvisational situations. If the inexperience along the offensive line can't provide McGee with enough time to execute the offense, Johnson might see his window of opportunity come open.

Though Johnson seems to be the heir-apparent to McGee, redshirt freshman Ryan Tannehill caused quite a buzz in fall camp. The 6-4, 204-pound quarterback was described by the Aggie coaches as one of the top five athletes on the offensive side of the ball, and could contribute in a number of ways this season. Not only does Tannehill show promise as a future QB, but he will also see playing time at wide receiver and can backup punter Justin Brantly if necessary.

True freshman Tommy Dorman of Birdville High School will have the benefit of redshirting, but is progressing nicely since arriving in Aggieland in December.



RYAN TANNEHILL (FR)



TOMMY DORMAN (FR)

MIKE GOODSON (JR.)



While the Aggies aren't nearly as deep across the board as they'd like, running back is the absolute least of their worries in regards to depth. Junior **Mike Goodson** and senior **Jorvorskie Lane** might be the big names in the backfield, but injuries to both during two-a-days allowed a bevy of youngsters to answer the call and make their case for playing time.

Now at fullback, Lane has a chance to shine in Mike Sherman's offense if he can shed some weight and stay healthy. A great senior season would allow him to show NFL scouts what he can do in a pro system.

As long as he's healthy, Goodson will be the featured weapon in Sherman's arsenal. After an offseason of hard work in the weightroom, Goodson reported to camp in better shape than ever, checking in at 6-0 and nearly 210 pounds. The extra weight hasn't had any effect on Goodson's speed, as the electric No. 3 will be as dangerous as ever taking handoffs and receiving passes in the open field.

Fans will need to look closely when watching the Aggie running backs this year, as freshman **Cyrus Gray** could easily be mistaken for the veteran Goodson. It's tough to call Gray's emergence a surprise, as he was a highly recruited prospect coming from DeSoto, but the 5-10, 188-pounder has been nothing short of spectacular during two-a-days and proved that he is too good to keep off the field.

Bradley Stephens, a 5-10, 204-pound redshirt freshman from McAllen, always draws high praise from Sherman with his consistent play in the backfield. Though he might not have blazing speed, Stephens always manages to find the hole with strong cuts and great vision. Junior **Keondra Smith** and sophomore **Cornell Tarrant** would be on the two-deep rosters at the majority of the other Big 12 schools and provide great depth coming off the bench for Texas A&M.

"I want them to have a disdain for losing. If they can continue to grow their hunger to win, then we're going to have a good group this year."

—RANDY JORDAN



FIVE QUESTIONS FOR RUNNING BACKS COACH RANDY JORDAN



What do you expect from your running backs in terms of how they prepare and how they compete?

The biggest thing when they prepare is to know the opponent inside and out. I know they can run, but they have to be ready in protection. They have to know who the best blitzers are and where the pressures going to come from so that we can protect the quarterback and throw the ball. As far as day to day, I want them to compete. I want them to have a disdain for losing. If they can continue to grow their hunger to win, then we're going to have a good group this year.

How would you describe the team's depth at running back?

We're very fortunate, but that's all it is - depth, with talent. But until we take the field and show what we can do as not just running backs, but as an entire offense, it is what it is. We haven't done anything this year yet. We have some guys that have done some things in the past, but, always tell them it's like Janet Jackson - "What have you done for me lately?"

Who would you compare Mike Goodson to?

Mike is Mike. He has great talent and an unbelievable ability to catch the ball out of the backfield. I compare him to Marcus Allen a little bit. I played with Marcus during his last season in Oakland. I think Mike is just as fast as the ability to catch the ball and has the talent to do great things. I tell him every day to just keep grinding, to keep doing what he's doing and he'll be fine.

When you are on the recruiting trail, what do you say to the young men who are deciding which school to sign with?

The biggest thing is that we are a family atmosphere. I always tell kids that before we make a decision, we want to make sure the fit is right. Sometimes the fit is not right. With A&M you have the backing of the 12th Man and it doesn't get any better than playing on Kyle Field. You can stay in the state of Texas and you have an opportunity to play in the best conference in the south. You have a chance to play some great teams in the conference and typically the best team in the Big 12 south is going to play in a big time BCS bowl game. And that's what these kids want to do. They want to play on TV. They want to play for a national championship. And with coach Sherman here, the opportunity to play in a pro-style offense is very important. Everything adds up in favor for Texas A&M. That's what I tell them in a nutshell.

What has it been like to coach at Texas A&M?

I absolutely love it. I come to work every day with a big smile on my face. We've got great people, great fans, a great AD and a great coaching staff from top to bottom. We've got coach Kness who is the soul of the earth - he has been everywhere. We've got a young pup like myself and I'm coaching under a guy who has been at the highest level with the Green Bay Packers and Houston Texans. It doesn't get any better than this. I just try to bring energy and enthusiasm every time I step on the field. ■

WIDE RECEIVERS AND TIGHT ENDS

"I told them all at the beginning that I didn't care how they got here – whether you're highly recruited or not highly recruited, a walk-on or just happen to walk on the field picking up trash. We don't care. If [walk-on Drew Williamson] can help us win games, he's going to play."

—MIKE SHERMAN



TERRANCE MCCOY (SO.)



EJ SHARPLEY



Consistency will be key for the Aggie receiving corps, as Mike Sherman spent almost the entire preseason calling for players to step forward and catch the ball. Sherman even went so far as to call on the 12th Man to try out for the football team if they could catch the football.

We're not quite convinced that the receivers are as bad as advertised, as it's probably a case of a new head coach demanding perfection from a component of the offense that went untouched for the majority of the past two seasons. The receivers need to be light years ahead of where they were previously in order for the west coast offense to be effective, and several players have the ability to step forward and make big plays.

Senior Pierre Brown and junior Howard Morrow should split out wide as starters at opposite ends of the field, and both players will need to significantly elevate their level of play to live up to their high billing coming out of high school. Morrow provided highlight-reel receptions early on in his career against Texas State, Baylor and Oklahoma, so it will be interesting to see how he progresses once he takes the field in the new offense.



The arrival of 6-4, 210-pound Jeff Fuller has been highly anticipated, and many Aggie fans look for him to emerge as a playmaker at wide receiver. With good hands, good speed, great height and great leaping ability, Fuller could be the answer to the Aggies' receiving woes. Senior walk-on Drew Williamson from Southlake Carroll worked his way into the starting rotation in the offseason, showing the most sure set of hands on the team. When not toting the rock from tailback, freshman Cyrus Gray will line up in the slot to add speed and playmaking ability to the field. EJ Shankle, Terrence McCoy, Chris Caflisch and Nick Trice should be in the rotation as well. And keep an eye out for the aforementioned Ryan Tannehill. The backup

quarterback has the potential to make a big impact on the team this season as an occasional wide receiver.

At tight end, junior Jamie McCoy has the large task of filling the large shoes of Martellus Bennett and Joey Thomas. McCoy has bulked up since making the transition from receiver, but will have to prove he's ready to take on the battle in the trenches to be a full-time end. Sophomore Billy Chavis has vacated the defensive side of the ball to play tight end, and redshirt freshmen Harold Turnage and Frank Avery will be placed in the rotation as a change of pace.

True freshman KJ Williams has the most impact potential, but like all newcomers will have to go through growing pains to get there.

"Everybody criticizes [the former coaching regime] for not throwing the ball last year. And I [told the receivers] maybe it's because you couldn't catch the football. If you can't catch the ball, we won't throw it, either."

—M.KE SHERMAN





No position saw more depletion at the end of last season than the offensive line, and as a result, several newcomers will be asked to compete at a high level sooner than expected. Four of the five starters are in tact, as senior Travis Schneider along with juniors Lee Grimes, Kevin Matthews, and Michael Shumard have earned their stripes as the most consistent players along the line. The quest for the fifth starter remains a mystery, and Shumard continues to shuffle between tackle and guard as offensive line coach Jim Turner searches for an answer.

Most likely, Shumard will line up at tackle, as redshirt freshman Evan Eike and true freshman Brian Thomas battle for the final starting position at guard. Eike, a Bryan native, is bigger and has a year's experience under his belt after redshirting last season, but Pearland's Thomas is quicker and typically displays better technique. The battle between the two will likely continue all the way into conference play.

Junior Robbie Frost couldn't quite hold off Shumard at tackle opposite Schneider, but can provide serviceable depth and a Big 12-ready physique if called upon. Vince Williams, a junior from Dallas Carter who switched over from the defensive line, suffered an injury during two-a-days that may have slowed his progress significantly. As a result, the door has swung open for true freshmen Leroy Chevalier (Houston Yates HS), Chris Lathrop (Cy Fair HS) and Joe Villavisencio (Jacksonville HS) to compete for a spot in the two-deep at guard.

Schneider, a once unknown prospect from Bellville, has emerged as the unit's unquestioned leader, and the 6-8, 300-pound giant looks to turn the heads of NFL scouts during his senior campaign.

"Running this summer once I started dropping weight, it's the best I've ever felt like. I can run, I can make the times. I always despised running and I still don't like it but I'm able to do it now."

—LEE GRIMES



AGGIE LAND ILLUSTRATED'S PROJECTED

DEPTH CHART

DEFENSE

JOE KINES - DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
BUDDY WYATT - DEFENSIVE LINE
CHARLES MCMILLIAN - DEFENSIVE BACKS
VAN MALONE - DEFENSIVE BACKS

ANTON
DION
DEVIN
GREGG

FS

CHRISTIAN
BATES
JON
PETERSON

KEITH
BRUNN
DANNY
GORRER

X CB

RUFY
CAVANAGH
GARRETT
WILLIAMS

X OLB

MATT
MOSS
CORY
BROOKS

X DE

X MLB

ANTHONY
LEWIS
MATT
FATHERSTON

EDDIE
BROWN
LON
MICHAEL

X DT

X OLB

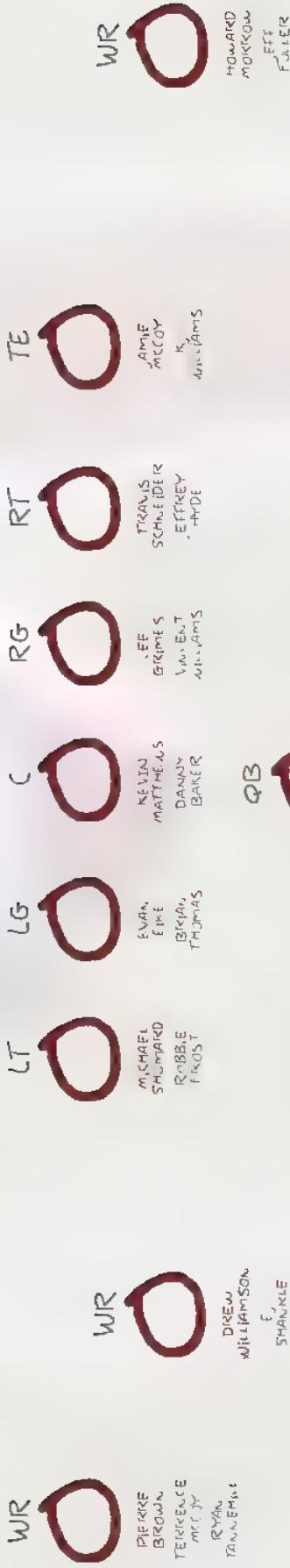
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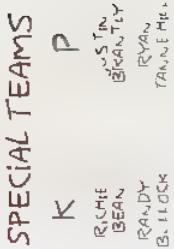
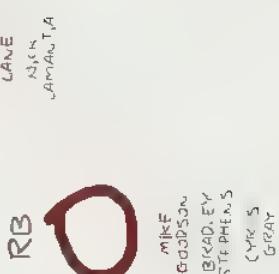
X DE

X CB

KEITH
FRIDERIC
DODD
DURGH



NOLAN CROMWELL OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
 TAM ROSSLEY QUARTERBACKS
 RANDY JORDAN RUNNING BACKS
 Jim TURNER OFFENSIVE LINE
 Kirk Dall TIGHT ENDS, SPECIAL TEAMS





It's tough to imagine the Aggies being able to lose two defensive line prospects to the NFL draft and still manage to be better than the year before, but that could very well be the case in 2008. A blend of upperclassmen and talented freshmen combine to give new d-line coach Buddy Wyatt a promising group to work with.

At tackle, junior Kellen Heard and sophomore Lucas Patterson rank among the Big 12's best. The 6-6 Heard has slimmed down to the 315-320 pound range, nearly 60 pounds less than when he first arrived in Aggieland. An unstoppable force when his motor is running, Heard has vowed to play every down as though it were his last this season. If he stays true to his word, Heard should play his way into an early selection in next year's draft. Along side Heard, the soft-spoken Patterson is one of the most consistently dominant defenders on the Aggie defense. Coach Sherman describes Patterson as a pro because of his ability to go about his business day in and day out, on and off the field.

Heard and Patterson are backed up by junior David Tufuga and a host of talented freshmen: Eddie Brown (Waller HS),



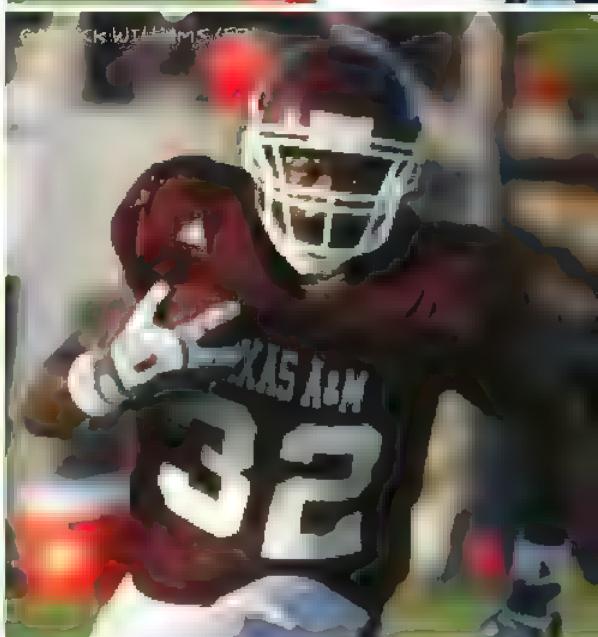
Rod Davis (Aldine Eisenhower HS), Adren Dorsey (John Tyler HS), and Tony Eddie (formerly Tony Jerod of DeSoto HS). Realistically, all four could end up seeing the field this season because of a lack of depth at the position. Ideally, only two of the four would be forced into action. During two-a-days, Brown and Eddie emerged as the two most likely contenders. Both considered grade risks coming out of high school, the young men should be applauded for their hard work in the classroom.

Defensive end is anchored by a trio of seniors: Michael Bennett, Amos Gbunblee and Cyril Obiozor. Of the three, Bennett has the big play potential, but can also find himself out of place at times. He and Gbunblee will compete for a starting spot. Obiozor, on the other hand, has his spot nailed down. He has drawn high praise from the coaching staff for his consistency and technique. JUCO transfer Matt Moss continues to make his presence felt and should be a key factor in the rotation this season. Junior Paul Freeney shows good quickness off the edge, and sophomore Cody Williams is quietly developing his raw potential.



"Always."

—KELLEN HEARD
WHEN ASKED IF HE IS
LOOKING FORWARD TO
PLAYING AGAINST
COLT MCCOY THIS
SEASON



"We have great offenses, great offensive coordinators and a boatload of great quarterbacks in this league. It's like being a cat in a room full of rockers. You have to be careful where you put your tail."

—JOE KINES



Last season, the Aggies only utilized two linebackers in their defensive alignment, and the two players that logged the majority of the playing time were lost to graduation. As a result, the 2008 squad is left with virtually zero experience at the position. Undoubtedly, the young unit will experience a great deal of growing pains this season.

Fortunately, new defensive coordinator/linebackers coach Joe Kines brings over 40 years of coaching experience to the table, and so far the players have responded well to the veteran's style of teaching. There's no substitute for experience, so Kines will have to instill as much of his knowledge as possible into his young linebacking corps.

The new defensive alignment will feature three linebackers in its base package, and sophomore Von Miller, redshirt freshman Garrick Williams and junior Matt Featherston have emerged as likely starters. Featherston has seen the most playing time of the three, and he'll man the middle linebacker spot. Fellow junior

Anthony Lewis will backup Featherston. Lewis' strength is stopping the run, so when the Ags need a stop in a short-yardage situation, No. 36 will likely be on the field somewhere.

The outside linebackers — Miller and Williams — have both transitioned from other defensive positions. Miller played as an undersized defensive end as a true freshman last season, only seeing the field in obvious passing situations. His speed and flash off the edge will be a welcomed site for seekers of the Wrecking Crew of old. Williams is a 6-2, 220-pound former safety that showed good skills in pass coverage. If he can stay away from injuries, Williams could be the surprise of the defense. Walk-ons Derek Dumas and Johnathan Haynes are the backup outside linebackers.

True freshman Ricky Cavanaugh (Austin LBJ HS) will likely see the field this season due to a lack of depth, but fellow frosh Andrew Wolridge (Lexington HS) and Aaron Buckley (Palacious HS) should have the luxury of redshirting.



BEVIN GREGG (SR)



"When guys have good summers it usually carries over to the season and these guys have all had really good summers."

—VAN MALONE

As the Aggies entered fall camp, the secondary looked as though it could be the strength of the Aggie defense. Only time will tell whether or not that rings true, but there's plenty of experience that could help make the case.

At cornerback, junior **Jordan Pugh** welcomes the transition back to his natural position (Pugh was a highly touted CB in high school before being moved to safety last season) and battles a pair of seniors

Danny Gorrer and **Arkeith Brown** for one of two starting jobs. Pugh and Gorrer will likely get the nod. When healthy, Gorrer's world-class speed and natural instincts make him arguably the most dominant corner to don the maroon and white since Sammy Davis, but No. 4's tendency to be injury-prone has kept him from showcasing his ability. Brown has as much speed and raw athleticism as anyone on the A&M roster, and can step in when called upon. Terrence Frederick, a true freshman from Katy, showed good coverage ability in his first fall camp and is another likely candidate to lose his red shirt and contribute this season.

At strong safety, an ongoing battle between seniors **Devin Gregg** and **Alton Dixon** was one of the showcases of August camp. Gregg started all 13 games last season and registered 77 tackles, but Dixon's smash-mouth style and big play ability simply make him tough to keep off the field. No matter who starts, both players will likely split time at the position all season.

Junior **Jordan Peterson** moved over to free safety from cornerback with the coaching change, and the junior promptly locked down the starting position. Feeling more natural at safety than corner, Peterson has been described as the quarterback of the Aggie defense and drew high praise from Mike Sherman in August. The young and the old back up Peterson, as true freshman **Trent Hunter** of Katy and senior **Johnathan Batson** will both likely provide depth.



FIVE QUESTIONS FOR DEFENSIVE BACKS COACH VAN MALONE



How would you describe the depth at safety?

We've got three guys—Jordan Peterson, Alton Dixon and Devin Gregg—who are the core of the group. Then we have Johnathan Batson who is a senior and has had some opportunities to play. He doesn't have the experience, but being a senior, I expect him to have a really good year. When guys have good summers it usually carries over to the season and these guys have all had really good summers. They are really exciting for me right now.

What does Devin Gregg mean to the group?

Devin provides a lot of senior leadership for us. He's not a vocal guy, but he goes about his business and is a confident professional. He does the right things and you don't have to worry about him off the field or in the classroom. He's been that way since I got here. That's what a demand from all of them, and he's the model for the younger guys, also put a lot of pressure on him to be more productive because he has been a bright spot and played quite a bit, but he has not taken his game to another level. He has not created turnovers or been highly aggressive. So he has some things to work on, but he definitely does some things I'm pleased with.

Do you see the younger guys contributing this season?

They are down on the depth chart right now, but you expect them to be. When Jordan Pugh came here, we didn't redshirt him. I signed him in that first year, but as a freshman, he never was ready. He was bright and athletic, but never was ready. In this day and age, they either leave early to go to the NFL or you get fired. So as a coach, you have to deal with the here and now. Look at a guy like Trent Hunter, playing all those games for a program like Katy, winning a state championship and being the player of the year, but he's still a freshman. So, try not to put pressure on him to perform like the guys who have been here and gone through a spring practice. But I do put great expectations on him to pay attention. I'd really like to see him take part in special teams to get some experience and that will get him on the field more as the season progresses. Keon Fritch is a little behind Trent right now, but he's also a freshman. There heads might be spinning a little bit, but I'm looking for the attitude and their commitment to doing the extra things to earn.

What has it been like to coach for Texas A&M?

For me, you know, I played at the other school. The traditions I didn't come to this school, but I've always respected the traditions. And to be a part of that is big for me. When I was at Arizona State and had the opportunity to come here, it was a no-brainer. At Texas, when we played against A&M, I'd be on the sidelines watching the Aggie defense. There have been some offensive stars recently, but this is a defensive school! The fans understand that and expect a great defense. When the defense is on the field, they're loud as hell. As a coach, I really like that. When you don't do it the right way, they'll let you know. And respect that as well. My family loves College Station. My kids say all kinds of bad things about the Longhorns.

Speaking of, you are known as the ace recruiter. How can a Longhorn be so good at selling Texas A&M to recruits?

Well, I want to win. You know some of the guys on the Texas staff are good friends of mine and I recruit head-to-head against them. One thing I love about this staff is that there are no egos. I may get the reputation for being the ace recruiter, but we're recruiting for Texas A&M. I may be recruiting a kid in Dallas or Houston—we cross over each other's lines because it doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is getting them to Texas A&M. **M**



Senior punter Justin Brantly enters his final season in maroon and white, where he's been nothing short of phenomenal throughout his entire career. Only former Texas A&M All American and NFL All-Pro Shane Lechler ranks ahead of Brantly on the all-time record books. In a close game where field position plays a vital role, the Aggies can count on Brantly to give them an edge.

At kicker, things aren't nearly as sturdy for Mike Sherman's debut season. Last year's starter, Matt Szymanski, transferred to SMU during the offseason leaving the placekicking job wide open. Senior Richie Bean has a strong leg, but has been inconsistent throughout his career. True freshman Randy Bullock of Klein will challenge Bean for the rights to kickoff and attempt field goals this season.

Junior Jordan Peterson has the early edge on continuing his punt return duties from last season, but true freshman Cyrus Gray is as exciting as they come with the ball in his hands and could emerge as a valuable asset for the Aggie special teams unit. Look for Gray to find the field at kick returner as well, joining Bradley Stephens, Jordan Pugh or EJ Shankle. ■



BR ANN DAVIS '01

"I've said from the beginning it's their team. If I don't let [Aggie fans] come to practice, that doesn't make a whole lot of sense."

—MIKE SHERMAN

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08.30.08

ARKANSAS STATE RED WOLVES

LAST SEASON: 5-7, 3-4 IN SUN BELT

OVERVIEW:

This isn't the same Arkansas State squad that took the Longhorns deep into the 4th quarter in last year's season opener. The Red Wolves (formerly the Indians) lost all of their starters in the secondary, and four of the five starting offensive linemen. Still they return two-time 1,000-yard rusher Reggie Arnold and starting quarterback Corey Leonard, a 2007 All-Sun Belt Conference selection. Leonard threw for 2,235 yards and 16 touchdowns last season. Texas A&M and Arkansas State last met in 2003, where the Aggies only managed to garner a 26-11 victory. Ironically, that was Dennis Franchione's first game as Texas A&M's head coach.

AI'S PREDICTION:

The game shouldn't be close but first games are never certain, especially under a new head coach. Arnold will be a good test for the Aggie defense, but in the end Mike Goodson and the A&M ground attack should lead an unstoppable offensive charge.

SCHEDULE:

Aug 30	at Texas A&M
Sep 6	Texas Southern
Sep 13	Southern Mississippi
Sep 20	Middle Tennessee
Sep 27	at Memphis
Oct 4	at Louisiana-Lafayette
Oct 11	Arkansas
Nov 8	at Florida International
Nov 22	Florida Atlantic
Nov 29	at North Texas
Dec 6	at Troy



09.20.08

MIAMI HURRICANES

LAST SEASON: 5-7, 2-6 IN ACC

OVERVIEW:

The Aggies were embarrassed by the Hurricanes last year on national television, in what was inevitably the beginning of the end of the Dennis Franchione era. Though they stomped A&M, Miami never made much progress last season under first year coach Randy Shannon. The quarterback job is still in question, and Miami's talented young running backs must begin to live up to expectations in order to open up the passing game. Defensively, the Hurricanes hired former Kansas defensive coordinator Bill Young, whose Jayhawk defense was the 12th best unit in the country last year.

AI'S PREDICTION:

Can it revenge, call it vindication, call it redemption or call it a litmus test. No matter how you label it, this is the non-conference game on everyone's mind entering the season. The Canes can be out-schemed by many, but trumped on talent by few. Will Mike Sherman and Kyle Field be the difference? Our sources say yes.

SCHEDULE:

Aug 28	Charleston Southern
Sep 6	at Florida
Sep 20	at Texas A&M
Sep 27	North Carolina
Oct 4	Florida State
Oct 18	at Duke
Oct 25	Wake Forest
Nov 1	at Virginia
Nov 13	Virginia Tech
Nov 20	Georgia Tech
Nov 29	at North Carolina State



09.06.08

AT NEW MEXICO LOBOS

LAST SEASON: 9-4, 5-3 IN MOUNTAIN WEST

OVERVIEW:

Since 2001, New Mexico is the only team in the Mountain West to record at least six wins every year and never post a losing record in conference play. Last year was one of the program's most impressive seasons to date, as they posted a 9-4 record that included a 23-0 win over Nevada in the New Mexico Bowl. The Lobos' prolific offense is led by 3,000-yard passer Donovan Porterie. For the second week in a row, the Aggies will have to contain a two-time 1,000-yard running back in Rodney Ferguson. Defensively, the Lobos are thin up front but return all five starters in the secondary.

AI'S PREDICTION:

While New Mexico certainly isn't the biggest name on the schedule, the team could pose one of the toughest matchups for the Aggies so early in the season. The overall talent level should tip the scale in A&M's favor, but this should certainly be noted as one to watch on the calendar.

SCHEDULE:

Aug 30	TCU
Sep 6	Texas A&M
Sep 13	Arizona
Sep 20	at Tulsa
Sep 27	at New Mexico State
Oct 4	Wyoming
Oct 11	Brigham Young
Oct 18	San Diego State
Oct 25	at Air Force
Nov 1	Jah
Nov 8	at Navy
Nov 15	at Colorado State



09.27.08

ARMY BLACK KNIGHTS

LAST SEASON: 3-9

E-E

The Black Knights struggled mightily in 2007, so much so that head coach Stan Brock closed practices in the spring to undergo a complete overhaul. An option-based offensive attack emerged, and improving on the 186.6 rushing yards per game last season will be a necessity in order for Army to be competitive. With only four returning starters, offensive improvement will be no easy task. Defensively, the Black Knights only return five starters from a unit that gave up over 30 points and 423 yards per game last season.

AI'S PREDICTION:

The Aggies barely squeaked out a victory two years ago in San Antonio over the Black Knights in a classic Alamodome matchup. This year's contest will likely be much, much different. The two tradition-rich institutions may have a lot in common, but football teams probably won't be one of them this season. We look for the Aggies to win big here to close out their non-conference schedule.

Aug 29	Temple
Sep 6	New Hampshire
Sep 13	Army
Sep 20	at Texas A&M
Sep 27	at Tulane
Oct 4	Eastern Michigan
Oct 11	at Buffalo
Oct 18	Louisiana Tech
Oct 25	Air Force
Nov 1	Rice
Nov 8	at Rutgers
Nov 15	Navy

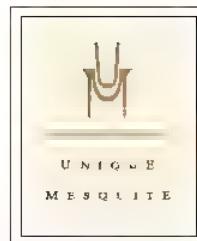


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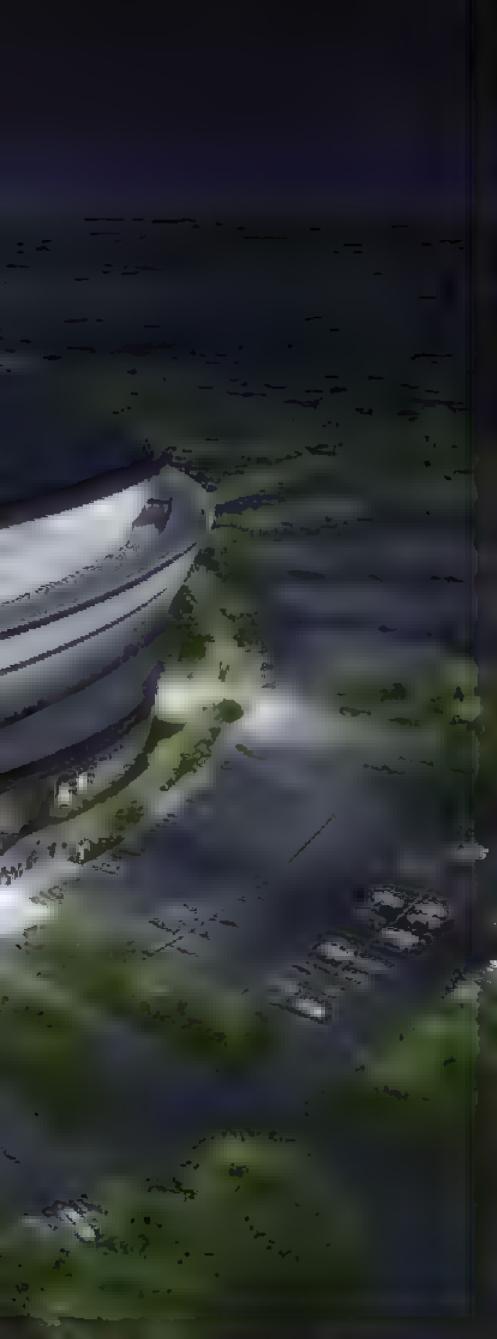
An Aggie architect's vision leads to the construction of the most advanced sports facility in the world

BY STEVE HUN

By the time it opens next fall, the new home of the Dallas Cowboys in Arlington will be the most state-of-the-art sports facility in the world. The venue has already been awarded Super Bowl XLV in 2011 and the Cotton Bowl will soon start playing its annual New Year's Day affair there with the line of other high-profile events forming to the right. Texas A&M and the University of Arkansas announced that the two schools will renew their rivalry with annual games at the stadium, beginning October 3, 2009. And the man behind it all is Bryan Trubey, a 1983 graduate from the A&M College of Architecture.

Trubey is a design principal with Dallas-based HKS Sports and Entertainment Group. But the new home of America's Team is just the latest in a long line of high-profile venues that this Aggie has designed. Since his first project—National Stadium in Hong Kong—Trubey has gone on to design such facilities as Miller Park in Milwaukee and Chicago's New Comiskey Park. He has also designed a number of venues in his hometown of Dallas—the American Airlines Center, Pizza Hut Park and Rangers Ballpark in Arlington.

Growing up in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas, Trubey remembers always having



a strong interest in architecture.

"I don't remember a time I didn't want to be an architect," he said. "It's just something from my early childhood on—I don't know why but I just always wanted to be an architect. Back in grade school, when we were asked to provide illustrations about what we wanted to be when we grew up, I was always trying to draw things that an architect would do."

After graduating from Texas A&M in 1983, Trubey ventured north to the Windy City and that was when things really started falling into place.

"I was working with a firm in Chicago in my mid-20s and we had a joint venture

"You won't find a stadium with a finer approach in terms of making it an important civic landmark and the quality of architecture we tried to achieve in terms of the form of the buildings and the quality of the materials that we used."

—BRYAN TRUBEY '83

with another firm who had a big sports practice," he recalled. "They offered me a job to work on a project and I thought it sounded pretty interesting."

That project was the Alamodome.

"I thought, wow, this is right in my backyard," he said. "My family has lived in Dallas for about 100 years and we still all live in the same neighborhood, so San Antonio is kind of my backyard. I've got a lot of friends from school who live there."

The Alamodome project lured Trubey to San Antonio in 1988 and he spent the next four years there.

Since coming to HKS in 1992, Trubey has worked on a number of high-profile venues, but admits that designing the new home of the Cowboys has raised the bar significantly.

"There are so many interesting things about that project, especially for an architect," he said.

One thing that was interesting, Trubey said, is that the project is not just a stadium.

"First and foremost, we wanted it to be one of the most important destination environments in the world," he said. "Off the back of that is the desire to make it an important civic and regional landmark."

The quality of architecture and materials used are without equal for any stadium in the United States.

"You won't find a stadium with a finer approach in terms of making it an important civic landmark and the quality of architecture we tried to achieve in terms of the form of the buildings and the quality of the materials that we used," he added.

With construction of the stadium in full swing, Trubey doesn't spend a great deal of time on site but does check in on the progress.

"I spend probably the equivalent of three or four days a month over there," he said. "We have a large team of people working on a project like this and my focus is on the overall quality of the design and making sure we deliver on that quality."

Trubey admits that the stadium has presented a unique but interesting set of challenges for him.

"I think the biggest challenge has been to deliver a stunning piece of architecture," he said. "That might not sound like such a big deal, but when you work on a building that is roughly three million square feet and this large, there aren't any examples of this being done in a way that's real pleasing. There are a lot of examples of just big, huge buildings that are engineering feats, but no examples of quality of look that we have achieved on this one. It's actually a very elegant building."

By the time the facility opens next fall, eight years will have passed since Trubey and his firm started looking for sites suitable for the project.

"They had a national competition for the project in 2001," he said, "and we were selected out of that competition to be the architects. Just because we happened to be here wasn't going to have much to do with why we were selected. That didn't give us an advantage."

Since leaving Aggieland some 25 years ago, Trubey has made quite a name for himself in sports architecture. About the only thing this Aggie has not designed is a facility at his alma mater. Trubey admits that landing such a project would be a special thing both for he and his firm. Maybe that's in his future. After all, what could be better than a sparkling new facility in Aggieland and one designed by an Aggie to boot? ■

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BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04

It's hard to believe the fiery freshman that took the field in Norman for an injured Reggie McNeal three years ago is entering his senior year. After undergoing off-season shoulder surgery, Stephen McGee wasn't expected to participate in spring drills, and found himself fighting tooth and nails to hold off a hungry sophomore Jerrod Johnson all the way through fall camp. Indeed, it's been a roller coaster ride for No. 7, and while the 2008 season will ultimately define his legacy in the maroon and white, Aggie fans will have plenty of memories from which to choose from over his three year reign as starting quarterback. But how should he be remembered?

A high school legend in tiny Burnet, Texas, McGee came to Texas A&M vaunted as a prolific passer. The three-year starter at Class 3A Burnet High compiled a 36-5 record for the Bulldogs, and finished his career with 8,256 yards passing and a 3A state-record 101 touchdown passes. Though his teammate, fellow blue-chip recruit and best friend Jordan Shipley chose to don burnt orange, McGee followed the path of family members before him and headed to Aggieland.

After redshirting as a freshman and obtaining the starter's role by the end of his second year on campus, McGee won the hearts of Aggies everywhere with his in-your-face style of play and unwillingness to back down. A nine-win sophomore season that concluded with a victory in Austin and a trip to the Holiday Bowl set the stage for what was sure to be the Aggies' year in 2008.

Unfortunately, that's when things started to turn ugly for the A&M program, and an early loss to Miami that left the McGee-led offense stagnant would be the catalyst to former head coach Dennis Franchione's demise. Somewhere along



the way, the recruit with the golden arm became better known as the battering-ram option quarterback who defended his coach whose head the fan base was calling for.

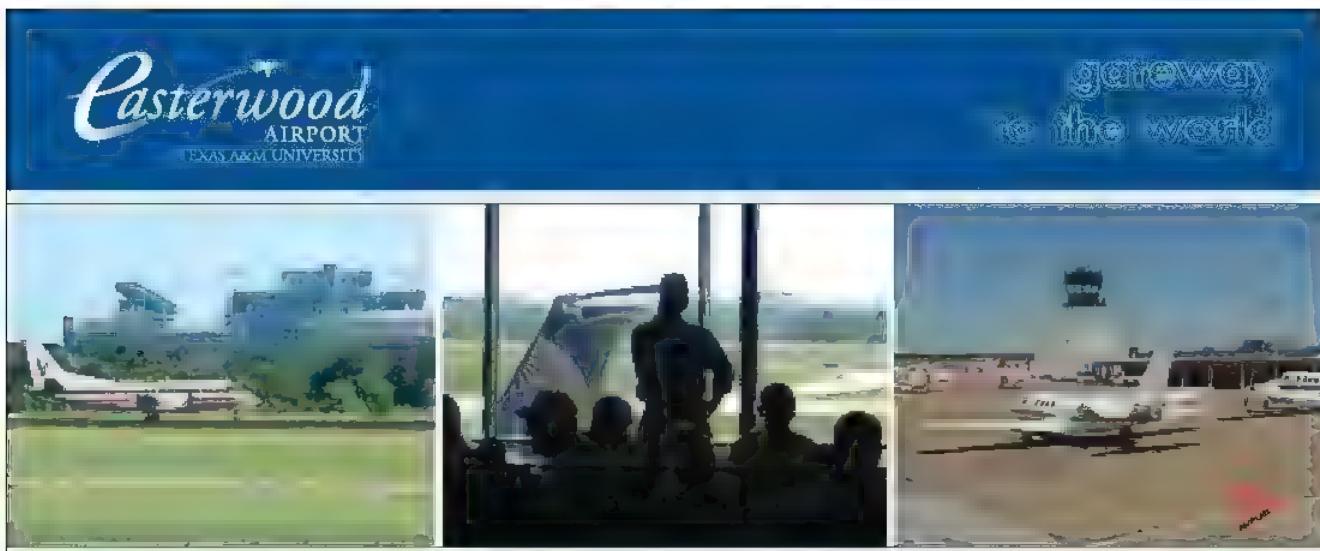
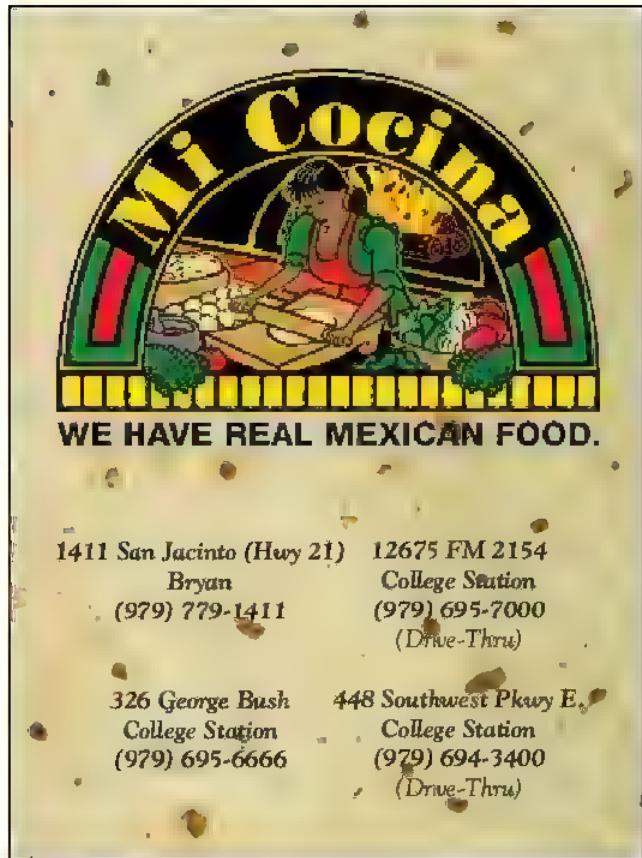
Although McGee's name can be found in the top ten of just about every passing category in Texas A&M's record book – including career completions, single game attempts, season attempts (No. 1) and career completion percentage (also No. 1) – he's widely regarded as a rushing quarterback. Coach Fran's option-based offense combined with McGee's win-at-all-cost, team-first mentality, led to him being labeled as a "run first" quarterback – a label much different from his high school days.

With Franchione's exit and Mike Sherman's entrance – along with the shift to a West Coast offense – a new chapter is set to unfold in the Stephen McGee/Texas A&M story. After winning back his starter's role during two-a-days (in an open competition that never was much of a competition at all), McGee will get one more shot at returning to the days of his high school accolades, where dropping back from under center, setting his feet,

staying in the pocket and delivering bullets downfield can once again come naturally.

Truth be told, a 2008 season that sees McGee develop into an NFL prospect would be the best thing that could happen to an Aggie program desperately needing to overcome its reputation as a quarterback graveyard. Fortunately, if McGee can enjoy success this season, then the Aggies should as well, as college teams typically only go as far as their quarterbacks take them.

Still, at the end of the day, Stephen McGee will simply be Stephen McGee – a quarterback who loves to compete, loves Texas A&M, and doesn't let how he's viewed or how he'll be remembered get in the way of how he plays the game. Truly, McGee's legacy is already full intact. A model citizen, a holder of both a bachelor's and master's degree from the prestigious and competitive Mays School of Business, and a leader both on and off the field, McGee embodies everything Texas A&M stands for. Anything that happens on the football field in 2008 is simply an unwritten chapter in a book that's already been published. ■



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(Top left) Brendon and Tatiana Mervaz and their daughter Alexis, with soccer star Marissa & White game. The Coaches' Charity Kick-off prior to the game raised approximately \$32,000 for the Alexis Yerza fund to help pay medical expenses as Alexis works to overcome brain trauma injuries. For more information visit www.coaching.com. (above) Members of the class of 2012 load their belongings onto moving trucks before boarding buses for Fish Camp to get their first true taste of Aggieland. (bottom left) The new Texas A&M mascot, Reveille VIII, with her handler John Buch. (below) Local and national celebrities were in attendance at the Soccer Marissa & White game including volleyball star Sarah Ann Meringen and basketball stars Carmelo Anthony and Shaquille O'Neal, country music legends Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood (right).



Tickets Please... AN USHER EXPERIENCE

BY LAUREN KERN '09

When the season ticket holders in the upper west section of Kyle Field return every fall, they always see one familiar face—Dan Kowalski.

Kowalski stands at the aisle, smiles and shakes a few hands as everyone takes their seats. He eagerly awaits the game, just like the other 80,000 spectators. He isn't a season ticket holder himself, but rather, he is an usher at the home of the Aggies.

Kowalski moved to College Station 20 years ago from Wyoming. He attended the University of Wyoming on a football scholarship where he played as a guard. So, it's no surprise that he found a place for himself at Kyle Field watching and supporting the Aggies.

Working as an environmental coordinator for Walnut Creek Mining Company in Bremond for his day job, he adds usher supervisor to his list of job titles when football season comes around. He doesn't do it for the pay, but rather does it for the game.

"I don't have to do this. But, when July and August come around, I start to get antsy for football season," he said.

Kowalski began ushering 20 years ago as an alternate. When his second season came around, he worked a student section on the 5 yard line. Ever since, Kowalski has been an almost permanent fixture on the upper west deck. In those 20 years, he has only missed two games. And the only reason for his absence was an aneurism in his aorta that required immediate surgery.

LOTS OF MEMORIES

Seeing the Aggies go through so many seasons, it comes as no surprise that Kowalski has made numerous memories and friends alike. Kowalski has seen Kyle Field in all different faces, hot and cold, good and bad. He remembers the Fresno State football game last September when people were dropping like flies from the scorching temperatures that reached to an almost 100 degree heat index.

Then, there was the time that, despite spending his childhood in the blistering winters of Wyoming, he remembers when Texas A&M played the University of Texas in a bitter cold game.

"I have never been so cold as when we played UT back in the nineties. It was half rain, half snow and 30 mph winds. I was miserable," Kowalski recalls.

"I have never been so cold as when we played UT back in the nineties. It was half rain, half snow and 30 mph winds. I was miserable."

—DAN KOWALSKI

Then there are the memories of the faces of Aggieland. When he worked in the student section he recalls a young Aggie.

"I was ushering and a girl standing in a portal starts crying. Turns out she has a fear of heights," he said.

Kowalski moved her from what would have been a treacherous seat in the nose-bleed section of third deck, to a not so intimidating seat at the bottom.

Another time, a man rushed up to him explaining that his 86-year-old father wasn't breathing. Kowalski rushed to the man who was passed out in the aisle and stood over him waiting for the EMT workers to get through the crowd of onlookers. He yelled at everyone to clear the aisle.

"I felt like Moses parting the Red Sea," he said. "I was so impressed by how people just moved."

After the medical team was able to get him breathing normally again, the man asked to stay and watch the rest of the game. Instead, the son took his reluctant father to the hospital.

FAMILIAR FACES

What Kowalski enjoys the most is greeting the old familiar faces that turn up every season. They stop by just to say hello with a friendly pat on the back and introduce him to new friends and family.

He thinks of Steve, a president of a company in Dallas. As a child, Steve suffered from Polio and consequently is in a wheelchair. He talks about helping to get him down the stairs to his seating area before the game, and helping him back up when the game was over. One year, Steve sent Kowalski a Christmas present.

His friend Skip offers him a coke at every game and occasionally brings him a BBQ sandwich from a tailgate party.

"I look forward to seeing the people and seeing what the team is going to do," he said.

And it's not only the spectators, he adds. The ushers are a great group of people dedicated to serving Kyle Field. Al Bormann, the head usher, is so dedicated that he worked for an entire year without pay.

Missing only two games in a span of 20 years, Kowalski clearly shows that same commitment to helping out the Aggies at Kyle Field. But, at the end of the day, he concludes with, "after all, I'm just an usher." ■

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THE SPIRIT OF REDASS

BY STEPHANIE WHITEHEAD '10

The term “redass” may at first sound like an expression pulled from a Jeff Foxworthy comedy routine, but the people of Aggieland know the true power the word holds. Often it is used to describe Aggies that are so fanatically devoted to their alma mater that they view A&M traditions as though they were directions sent from above. Never once have they missed the chance to yell “Uncover!” at two-percenters who fail to remove their hats.

Jessica Jones-Horvath '95 and her husband, Randy, have tapped into this passion for Aggieland through the opening of their newest business venture – Redass Sportswear. While this may be their first foray into collegiate retail, the couple already has experience as private business owners. The husband and wife team also owns The Greek Boutique and RA Athletics Co. here in College Station.

While the couple has found great success on the path they have taken in life, owning a small business has not always been their dream. Randy and Jessica were living in Sugar Land, Texas over seven years ago when they decided it was time for a change. Randy spent sixteen years building a career in broadcasting, yet felt he was ready to try something new.

THE CALL OF AGGIELAND

Jessica had been eager to move back to Aggieland since graduating in 1995.

“We wanted a place we could put down roots,” said Randy, who also craved that “small town feel.”

On a trip to Charleston, South Carolina they came across a Greek store that piqued their interest and caused them to look into the fraternity and sorority retail industry for themselves. After starting their own online Greek store, they found an existing Greek boutique in College Station, and within six months were the new owners.

The Greek Boutique grew rapidly, eventually leading to the development of a new business. The embroidery and screen



printing done by the store eventually turned into RA Athletics Company due to the high demand. The company now handles all of the Texas A&M football team's monogramming needs, including printing all 130 players' names on their jerseys.

A SOLID REPUTATION

Their reputation as the go-to company for any last minute problem is what keeps their solid fan base growing. Randy confirms that “you never ever tell the customer no, in relation to solving their problems.” As a result, they have “done some very bizarre things.” Randy validates this statement by recounting a story of an unexpected order for a reconstructed batting glove.

Last Spring, the Horvaths received a last minute order from an A&M baseball player who underwent hand surgery that made batting with a normal batting glove impossible. Although inexperienced in specialized batting gloves, the two im-

mediately said yes and, as usual, solved the customer’s problem.

REDASS BRINGS GREENBACKS

Always looking for new challenges, the couple decided to open a collegiate retail company on the heels of the success of RA Athletics Co. The next step was choosing a name for the new endeavor. While throwing out Aggie terminology “that tied back to the tradition of the school,” Randy and Jessica kept coming back to the word they felt most embodied the Bonfire spirit that they hoped to capture in the name.

“Everybody came together for Bonfire, and we wanted something that was going to be a little edgy – something that really stood out,” explained Randy.

Redass Sportswear has since opened on Harvey Road in College Station and shares a storefront with The Greek Boutique. Aggie sportswear fills 75 percent of the new store that contains dressing rooms modeled after the t.u. outhouses that traditionally sat atop the annual Bonfire.

The many definitions of redass can be found on the company web site, including: **Redass:** (*red-ass*) – In Texas: one who is beyond being a bad ass, one who will do whatever it takes to get the job done and will shoot first and ask questions later.

Without a doubt, the pair has successfully captured the spirit of Aggieland in the hard work and dedication they have displayed over the years. As Randy and Jessica have proven, they *will* do whatever it takes to get the job done. ■



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